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Letters and Correspondence

Paul Turner Sargent

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# Paul to Dario Sept. 1, 1943

Paul Sargent

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**P to Dario Sept. 1, 1943**

**Dear Dario,**

**You have the right impression in that we have had a long hot and very dry summer—and it is still here in force. Yesterday the temperature reached 100 degrees but last night was cool enough to sleep well. This morning is O.K. for temperature and may not go as high as yesterday. We have had a week or more of days that went above 100 degrees, the limit was 104 degrees and 105 degrees. And rain!!! It just does not come our way any more. Beginning at Champaign there has been plenty of rain north of here into Wisconsin. Chicago about a week ago had three days of rain. South and west of here it is one baked section; I know it is as far as Olney because I have had a letter from there lately. We have had of course, many hot dry summers but this is the worst for some years.**

**Charleston water supply is getting low but continues to run over the dam, and the river did have a rise of five feet when we were very dry here, from rains north.**

**The corn crop is now beyond help from any rain; it will be cut short perhaps half what it would have been. Some fields around here on clay ground won't have a dozen nubbins per acre. The good land will make I would guess 40-50 per acre. The west end of the state will have plenty of corn, so it could be worse with the drought more general.**

**My garden is depressing to contemplate—the work largely cancelled. The cucumbers were a flat failure, potatoes nearly so but not do much because of the dryness, too much wetness early. Are picking some good tomatoes now. One weighed 2 ¼ lbs. Unless we get rain soon there won't be any late beans.**

**Over a good many years I have observed some strange things about the weather. A dry spell in July and August is to be expected; it does not last long enough to hurt crops as a rule and also helps to check the growth of plants and bring the fruit. In some unlucky years like this, the dry spell comes early and lasts long.**

**Here is the queer part. The rainfall of the southern tip of Illinois is 40 inches per year and going north this drops to about 36 inches here and less north. Yet a thing I have noticed many**

years we will be dry here and north of here it will be very wet. I don't remember any records of that condition in middle of summer, that is wet here (and south) and dry north.

The rains of summer seem to go north yet in the course of a year we receive more rain here than they do north. That would be a good subject for a thesis—if more were known about the subject. The winter storms have some well known average paths across the U.S. One path along the Ohio River another that dips down from Canada across our northern tier of states.

I have a belief that these doing of the weather are deeper than just winds, and mountains; and //rations as we are told. Very little is known about the electricity of the earth. It is a big magnet and I have a hunch that these currents fluctuate at different times of the year to produce storms in some belts and not in others and vice versa. To me the driving force of storms is electricity the winds are the effect, not the cause.

This looks like a treatise on meteorology by and amateur meteorologist.

I have done very little painting this summer, the garden work took my time early then the heat has been intense. I can do physical work while streaming with sweat, but I can't paint under those conditions. The garden work has been mostly cancelled out by the drought; and I did not paint, so my summer results are mostly zero.

The landscape looks tired. Dead brown fields with withered leaves on bushes and trees and falling leaves, are not inspiring. Some rain and coolness will bring us to life again. The fall color cannot be first class this year. Most of the hickories are blistered and brown from the terrific weather effects. With rain soon the oaks and maples may be worth while. I am afraid the rain will begin in October which would be worse than none at all. Anywhere we will see what we see and accept it whatever it is.

The warm brown wood in your mess hall is (if not stained) probably redwood. It is a wood that is as near everlasting as wood can be. It does not burn easily and stands weather without paint.

If you have a library in your camp, see if there is not a book or so by John Muir. If so I think you will do well to read any and

**all of them you can find time do so. They are all about the mountains of California and Alaska, the glaciers and nature in general, not forgetting the wild flowers. You will absorb some of his enthusiasm and love of the natural things. He was one of those extremely rare individuals—a combination of scientist and poet, which of course is the formula for a naturalist of the right outlook on life. I have read all his books (there must be about a dozen) and I wish there were many more. His first book, “A Walk to the Gulf” is a good one to start with and is very different from his last ones.**

**I think you will do well to take the officer training. Being an officer involves more responsibility and also brings more pay, and also offers more doors than can come to a private.**

**Yes, I think you can study art just by observing nature. As I have said before the importance of planes can't be overemphasized. Keep these in mind, the three big ones, and think how you would paint them in the simplest direct way. You speak of much mist over the sea and land. In painting effects in mist a very good way is to cover the canvas with the gray that seems to predominate. Into this gray then paint the other colors, the strong colors being in the rocks, water, or foliage near at hand. The whole will then be tuned to that overall gray. Or you can put that gray previously mixed, into the colors directly. There is no one way for painting a given landscape, and each painter invents his own. But lacking one of your own, use some method that has been successful with other painters. I use the method of Alfred Cort for painting skies, a coat of yellow ocre and white over the whole sky, then into that paint the blue sky and a cool gray for the shadows on the clouds. A. Ernst said to paint the foreground with separate spots of put color, later graying if too strong.**

**Any landscape painter worth his salt is observing nature constantly, with or without the brush in hand. If he does not, he will get nowhere as the secrets of nature will never be opened to him because he has not knocked at the gate. We need to store the memory with impressions, colors, and forms, to be used later, consciously or not. The best way to add to this storehouse is making sketches of nature, hundreds of them, the making of the**

**sketches helps the memory, just as writing down facts helps the memory to hold it. With these thousands of sketches behind you, often some years, yo will be surprised as I have been when I am stuck on a picture in studio, how the memory of some sketch will com back to you to furnish the material to finish the picture. Some painters never sell their sketches, which I think is not a bad idea.**

**The war moves along. I think we can be pretty well certain that the Germans will be disposed of before this time next year—at the latest, and they can very well fold up any time sooner than that. They did so without previous notice in the other war. When the allies are in position to invade Germany with troops we can look for the Germans to say enough, as they don't want their country fought over. We may be nearer that climax than we think with the Russians giving them very rough treatment on their front. No doubt more things are wrong insie Germany than we hear about.**

**I am much in favor of the Russians getting into Germany first. They no doubt will have no qualms of conscience about giving the Germans the works. I think Germany should be laid waste so it will look no better than occupied Russia and other countries laid waste by the Germans. That is what worries me the most—that our appeasers will let Germans escape their just deserts. Ordinarily I don't believe in "an eye for an eye" treatment but that is the only thing these gangster nations understand so they should get it. Kind treatment they just consider a weakness in an enemy.**

**The son of the man who runs our store at Salisbury (Green), was killed about a week ago in a plane accident in Washington state.**

**I remembered in a general way how you aim a big coast defense gun, the field of fire is divided into squares and you aim for those.**

**Well, maybe you have worried through this far.**

**Sincerely and best wishes,**

**Paul—temperature today noon 95 degrees**